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ABSTRACT

Current negative attitudes about the future of schools of education can be reversed if teacher educators reorganize, regroup, and rethink their position and change what they have historically been doing. The School of Education faculty at Radford University (Virginia) has undergone such a process and has: (1) assumed leadership in initiating partnerships and links with inservice colleagues; (2) initiated changes in the delivery mode of inservice education; (3) developed a mission/philosophy which reflects the School of Education's goals; and (4) implemented major curriculum changes that more appropriately address the educational needs of clients. Eight specific steps have been taken to further the goals of the School of Education: (1) raising admission standards; (2) development of a competency based curriculum; (3) implementation of a four-year field oriented program; (4) development of exit criteria for teacher education graduates; (5) development of a governance structure that is consistent with National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education and Virginia State Department of Education standards; (6) establishment of new linkages and collaborative partnerships with the public schools; (7) establishment of a partnership with a selected high school; and (8) formation of a partnership with the National Education Association and the Virginia Education Association to develop a four-year assessment of its preservice programs. (CJB)

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RESPONSE TO THE NEED FOR QUALITY: THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION AT RADFORD UNIVERSITY*

by
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Introduction

The future of colleges of education in the United States is questionable, given present practice. A reversal of this perception is totally possible if teacher educators wish to reorganize, regroup, and rethink their position and to change what tney have historically been doing. The School of Education at Radford University has reorganized, regrouped, and rethought its position. In this process we have:

--assumed the leadership in initiating new partnerships and linkages with our inservice colleagues and have provided a united front in the preparation of educational personnel;

--initiated changes in the delivery mode of inservice education;

--developed a mission/philosophy which reflects a sense of purpose in what we are about;

--implemented major curriculum changes that more appropriately address the educational needs of our clients--both now and in the future.

As a medium sized, public supported, regional university, our future will be a result of what we do now in response to the problems presently confronting education. Many of the problems encountered by education in general, and teacher training institutions in particular, have resulted from the fact that these entities have consistently and significantly lagged behind what may be called the "best ideas."

Governor Charles Robb (1983) pointed out in his remarks to the Virginia

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Excerpted from a presentation at the National Council of States on Inservice Education, Dallas, Texas, November, 1983.

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Press Association in Richmond, Virginia, on January 7, 1983:

> Teacher preparation has been an issue for several years now. Our colleges continue to enroll and graduate vastly more teachers than our schools need, and yet we produce too few in areas that are vital to our economy (areas like math and science), and we offer too few spaces in business and technical disciplines to meet the needs in those fields. To my mind, we haven't changed to respond to changing times. We continue to teach more-or-less what we always did while the world around supplies a new set of answers.

As indicated earlier, teacher education programs will need to establish much closer relationships between and among the school divisions they serve. Institutions of higher education have historically enjoyed a high degree of autonomy in the development and overall administration of teacher education. The combination of austerity budgets, public dissatisfaction with the perceived quality of school programs, declining enrollments, and similar factors have been and will continue to exert pressure on teacher training institutions to establish cooperative, collaborative linkages with public schools. Such linkages can, and will, be mutually beneficial to everyone concerned.

Revitalizing Teacher Education Programs: A Regional Perspective

Radford University, the major teacher education institution serving the mountainous, rural southwestern portion of Virginia, takes pride in the strong interdisciplinary and innovative nature of its teacher education programs and the cooperative arrangements that have been developed with the public school divisions and sister institutions within the region.

The School of Education at Radford University has consistently affirmed its commitment to support Virginia's educational mission as part of its responsibility in serving the Commonwealth. Reflecting this commitment, the School of Education Mission Statement states that the School understands and appreciates:

> the extent to which schools serve as a tool in preserving the culture by transmitting knowledge, appreciation and ideals which help to foster our way of life. In order that our social system might be preserved and improved, we see education as the primary means through which our youth are prepared for the stewardship of our society.

In its report to the Southern Regional Education Board, the Task Force on Higher Education and the Schools offered twenty-five recommendations which comprise "those school-college matters most worthy of attention by both political and educational leaders at this time. Their implementation, of course, will depend in large measure on continuing and expanding cooperation among all sectors of education." During the past four years, several state and national professional organizations, the Virginia Department of Education, and the State Board of Education have sought answers to many of the contemporary problems of education. One of the more interesting results of these efforts has been the identification of several needs which parallel many of the SREB Task Force recommendations, including the following broad areas:

1. Development of more rigorous requirements for admission to teacher education programs;
2. Identification and implementation of exit criteria as prerequisites for graduation and/or certification of pre-service teachers;
3. Improving the quality of and expanding the requirements for field based experiences in teacher education programs;
4. Developing viable linkages (partnerships) between the schools and higher education to improve the work of both sectors.

The faculty and administration of the School of Education at Radford University have actively participated in many of the more significant state, regional and national meetings at which these concerns have been discussed. The School, with the support of the University, has embarked on a progressive program designed to move from rhetoric to reality and to develop a non-traditional teacher education

program which responds to these four general concerns and which integrates both preservice and inservice teacher education into one continuous program. As Corrigan (1980) has pointed out:

> A major purpose of education is to inquire into basic educational questions: discover new facets of teaching, learning, administering and counseling; apply research findings in a variety of educational settings; and synthesize the results of scholarly investigation in ways that are useful to professional practitioners.
>
> Central to the design of any educational improvement strategy for the future is recognition of the fact that schools, other educational community agencies, and colleges themselves, are interrelated and interactive components of one educational system. We must replace our present disconnected approach with a new partnership.

The School of Education has made visible progress in achieving this purpose. Eight specific steps have been initiated in the School, and these provide preliminary evidence indicative of this progress:

1. The raising of standards for admission to Teacher Education which includes an entrance grade point average of 2.5 and the maintaining of that requirement for graduation.

2. The development of a competency based curriculum with appropriate modules and instructional units.

3. The implementation of a four-year field oriented program (Freshmen and Sophomore Early Experience Program, Pre-Student Teaching Program, Expanded Student Teaching Program, and Post Student Teaching Seminars).

4. The development of exit criteria for teacher education graduates.

5. The development of a governance structure consistent with NCATE's standards as well as the Virginia State Department of Education.

6. The establishment of new linkages and collaborative partnerships with public school divisions through teacher-professor exchanges, cooperatively developed inservice programs, utilization of teams for the supervision of students in field based activities, team teaching efforts between university and school division faculty, and university based educators and school based educators working together to deliver courses in preservice education.

7. The establishment of a partnership between the School of Education and a selected high school for the purpose of developing curriculum and new programs, providing inservice training for teachers and administrators, developing a climate conducive to learning for students, and implementing model programs that can be replicated elsewhere.

8. The National Education Association, the Virginia Education Association, and the School of Education at Radford University have formed a partnership to develop a four year assessment of its preservice teacher education programs. The project will conclude in June of 1984 with a document that will be disseminated nationally. It is hoped that this pilot assessment program can be replicated by other schools and colleges of education throughout the country.

Conclusion

As we know, change in teacher education has been slow, if near non-existent, for a number of years. In reviewing the literature, one finds that historically many change-oriented programs have failed, some have floundered, and only a few have been successful. In this light, it appears that what is needed is a fresh perspective on who should be involved and how it should happen.

Ravitch (1983) indicates:

> The distance between where we are now and where we might be in the year 2000 is great, but this distance is not beyond our capacities to span. Probably the greatest obstacle to achieving lasting reform is, paradoxically, the tendency of reformers to scoff at piecemeal change. Experience suggests that small changes are likely to be enduring changes. Getting there--that is, achieving the highest potential--is first of all a matter of setting our sights and then of devising a series of small moves in the right direction. Better teachers, better teaching, better administration, better textbooks, better curricula, higher aspirations. The Tao says, "A journey of a thousand miles must begin with a single step." We know which steps to take, our problem will continue to be--as it has always been--reaching agreement on where we want to go.

Specifically, teacher educators should work toward a concept of developing partnerships and effective delivery services rather than the traditional lock-step curriculum and program thrusts for students that have previously been the norm in preservice and inservice education. Further, we need an amalgamation

of a number of areas and publics that, working together, will bring about needed change in the areas of preservice and inservice education.

As Warren Bennis, President of the University of Cincinnati, pointed out in The Chronicle of Higher Education dated September 22, 1975, in his article, "Managing the Unmanageable":

> The irony and paradox of our times is that precisely when the trust and credibility of leaders is at its lowest, when we survivors in leadership positions feel inhibited from exercising what little power we have, we most need people who can lead, who can transcend that vacuum. The crisis calls for leadership; but we're not leading.
>
> There is no simple solution. But one thing we must recognize is this: Academic leadership must develop the vision and strength to call the shots. There are risks in taking the initiative. The greater risk is to wait for orders. This means that administrators at every level must lead, not just manage. This means that colleges and universities have to recognize that they need leadership, that their need is vision, energy, and drive, rather than a bland and safe figurehead.

The School of Education at Radford University has responded to the need for leadership by formulating concepts and programs which incorporate specific competencies, exploratory experiences, and instructional strategies based on a collaborative management design.

In order to implement effectively these suggested strategies for change, we must not only create new learning environments that are receptive to this kind of change, but we must also strive to insure the acquisition and preparation of leadership personnel that can support and defend these concepts. Without a philosophical commitment on the part of those parties involved and an environment that facilitates growth, teacher education will never reach its fullest potential, regardless of existing levels of financial support.

The School of Education at Radford University has progressed in these new directions and we have responded to the realities, the rewards, and the demands of an ever-changing society.

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